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FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS • INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATARIANS • CONCERNED EVANGELICALS

The role of conscience in belief

Dale Ratzlaff

I have received dozens of calls from people transitioning out of Adventism. These people know about many of the problems of SDA doctrine and have decided to leave Adventism. Yet, at the same time, they have great difficulty in making a full transition to a community Christian church. While their conscience on the one hand is driving them

- TRUE Our conscience is always a safe guide to
- FALSE lead us into truth.
- TRUE Due to education and environment our
- FALSE conscience can be misinformed.
- TRUE We should always follow our conscience.
- FALSE
- TRUE It is O.K. to go against our conscience
- FALSE when it is misinformed.
- TRUE It is O.K. to go against our conscience as
- FALSE long as one does not do it too often.
- TRUE Refusing to look at evidence has nothing
- FALSE to do with our conscience.

Only those of us who have made this journey can fully understand the trauma involved.

from Adventism, yet on the other their conscience keeps them from going all the way. Only those of us who have made this journey can fully understand the trauma involved. I have taken one chapter out of *The Recovering Adventist*, a book I am writing, and include a modification of it here. It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this study of God's Word to help every reader come to grips with the very important issue of conscience. To bring some of the issues into focus, respond to these true or false questions:

What is the conscience? Here are some short one-liners on the lighter side.

- Conscience is what hurts when everything else feels good.
- The greatest tormentor of the human soul is a guilty conscience.
- A guilty conscience keeps more people awake than coffee.
- Nothing brings more joy, peace and satisfaction than a clear conscience.
- If a sermon is going to prick the conscience, it must have sharply defined points.

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LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES (LAM), INC

Mission: To proclaim the good news of the new covenant gospel of grace in Christ and to combat the errors of legalism and false religion.

Motto: Truth needs no other foundation than honest investigation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to follow truth when it is revealed.

Message: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, that no one should boast." Ephesians 2:8,9

Let's exalt Christ in 2002

It is our sincere prayer that each of our readers will have a happy and prosperous new year—but more than that, we trust that you will understand new dimensions in the grace, love, mercy and justice of God. Justice? Yes, we wish for you to understand the full implications of the Christ event through the window of God's justice. For only then will you be able to experience the true rest of God's grace, love and mercy!

and experiencing the true rest of God (Heb. 4:3). Yes, our goal at LAM is to exalt Christ and combat anything that takes away from the glorious redemption that has been purchased for us.

Thank You!

Many of you have given very liberally to support our ministry. We thank you for partnering with us. We pray that you will be richly blessed and that God will supply all your needs in Christ Jesus! We would ask that you would continue to pray for us that we will write just what is needed to help our readers experience a closer walk with God.

Would you like to join LAM'S new email news group?

Here is how it works. You send us your email address with the message, "Add me to your news group." About once a month you will receive a letter from LAM with the latest news, new books, book sales, special prayer requests and other items of interest to "formers" and transitioning Adventists. We may, if the situation warrants, send special letters more than once a month, but it is not our intent to bombard you with email. You may remove your name at any time and your email address will not be given to anyone else without your permission. Just email to dale@ratzlaf.com

Part Four of Dr. Mazzaferri's "Seventh-day Adventism's Dogma of an Investigative Judgment through Ellen White's Eyes."

We believe this article will stir the thinking of many former Adventists and Evangelicals. Dr. Mazzaferri's approach to prophecy may be somewhat different from that of many of our readers. Whether or not you agree with his philosophy of prophecy, his conclusion that there is no biblical foundation to the SDA dogma of the investigative judgment is inescapable.

Please recognize that the Hebrew transliterations may not be correctly spelled or accented as this article has gone through several different word processors and font families in its journey to this page. This will be the last part of this study we will print in *Proclamation*. However, it is not the total work. Those wanting the complete study with the appendices and footnotes are encouraged to go to www.ratzlaf.com/downloads/htm, scroll down and click on "Investigative Judgment" under "Miscellaneous Articles" !

Our goal at LAM is to exalt Christ and combat anything that takes away from the glorious redemption that has been purchased for us.

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and [continue to] fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Rom. 3:21–26

It is here that we come to grips with the central kernel of the gospel. Note how Jesus focused on these "weightier provisions of the law"

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. Mt. 23:23

In Christ God's justice has been met! In Christ God's mercy is released! In Christ God's faithfulness to us is demonstrated! It is our prayer that the manifestation of God's gift in Christ will engender a faith response on our part so that we will live without condemnation (Rom. 8:1); knowing that we now have eternal life (Jn 6:47); assured of our salvation (Eph. 2:8); sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 30); motivated to do the good works that God has prepared for us (Eph. 2:10);

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The Role of Conscience in Belief CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Conscience is the moral judging faculty of the mind

I believe our conscience functions in three ways: First, it is a judge telling us that what we have done is either good or bad. Second the conscience acts like a starter and causes us to take action to do something that we ought to do. Third, conscience sometimes functions as a break to keep us from doing what we believe to be wrong. An illustration will help.

My father died when I was ten years old and left me his carpenter hand tools. Those were the days before power tools were widely in use. I vividly remember when some years later I decided to sharpen the hand saw. My father's tools included a little triangular shaped file, a clamp-type vice to hold the saw while it was being sharpened, and a saw set, a complicated little tool which would slightly bend a saw tooth so that saw would not bind. I knew nothing about sharpening a saw, but I didn't see any reason why I could not do it. So I started. I filed and filed. Then I thought I had better set the saw. Not knowing what I was doing or even how to adjust the saw set, I started bending every other tooth.

When I got done, I envisioned a smooth, sharp, easy-cutting saw. Not so! It was worse than before I had started to sharpen it. So I did it all over again. This time it was worse yet. Not being one to give up easily, I tried again. Now, it would not cut at all. I had filed some teeth more than others so some of them were too short and did not even touch the wood while others were too long and gouged the wood. The set of the saw was not even. In desperation I decided that I had better take the saw to a person who knew what he was doing. Down the road a few blocks from our house was a saw shop. I walked down to this shop and presented him with my saw and simply said, "Would you please sharpen this saw?" He looked at it inquisitively, held it up to his eye and looked down the row of teeth and said, "Whoever filed this saw last sure didn't know what he was doing." Then he began telling me all the things that "this person" had done wrong.

I was not prepared for his next words. "By the way," he said, "who was the dumb idiot who tried to sharpen this saw?" I did not want to be that dumb idiot, so I said, "Some guy that lives down the road a few blocks!" Then, wouldn't you know it, he said, "What's his name?" I blurted out, "I don't remember." and got out of there as fast as I could!

I had my mother pick up the saw when it was ready as I never wanted to see this man again. But every day on the way to school, guess what we drove by? Right. And every day on the way home from school, guess what we went by? Right again. Twice every day, guess what this thing called conscience was doing to this eighth grade boy? Right. Finally, I decided it would be better to confess my lie than to be stabbed twice a day!

In this illustration, we see the conscience first acting as a judge: "You told a lie and that was wrong." Then it operated as a starter. "You better go and confess your lie."

Conscience is something we get as standard equipment at birth. In Romans 2, Paul speaks about Gentiles who don't even know the law yet have the law written on their hearts. Their consciences alternately accuse or else defend them. Anthropologists have found that in every culture there are prescriptions against murder, incest, untruth, sexual excess, and there are obligations of parents to their children and children to their parents.¹ There seems to be in every person some innate conscience based upon what we call "natural law" which tells us if we are doing right or wrong.

Our social and religious training, however, also influences conscience. In 1 Corinthians 8 Paul speaks about a "weak conscience" which is lacking in knowledge. So our conscience is a very complex thing. It is the moral judging faculty of the mind and it makes its decisions based upon a certain innate, God given sense of right and wrong coupled with our social and religious training. Because of its complexity we must ask ourselves some very penetrating questions.

If our social and religious training can influence the conscience, then is it possible that some people may have an incorrectly or incompletely educated conscience? Take, for example, the intense hatred of the Jews that is present in children who grow up in a radical fundamentalist Moslem home. If the conscience can be educated incorrectly, then can the conscience always be trusted to be a safe guide? Logically we have to conclude, "No." This, however, leads us to the next most difficult question. If the conscience cannot always be trusted, should it always be followed? Now we find ourselves in a dilemma. If the conscience is the moral judging factor of the mind,

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and if it is educated incorrectly, it has no way of knowing the inadequacy, and it is incapable of picking up the error. It is like asking someone, "What is it you do not know?" As a computer cannot process data to which it does not have access, so the poorly or incorrectly educated conscience could guide us in the wrong way. This leads us to our first conclusion.

Our moral database may be deficient.

Most of us do not want to admit to this, but it is a truth of Scripture, and it is proved in experience. We can see it in the lives of others, but we have a hard time believing it is true for us. Underline in your thinking the next sentence. Recognizing the possibility that our moral database may be deficient is often the first step out of spiritual bondage.

Once we recognize that our moral database may be deficient, then we can do something about it. That is one of the many reasons for continued personal Bible reading, regular church attendance and involvement in small group Bible studies. These activities should be in settings where true inductive study is done and where people are free to kindly challenge the blind spots of erroneous thinking in one another. There should be openness to the Holy Spirit and a willingness to follow truth when it is received.

An incorrectly educated conscience may have two results. First, it may often cause false guilt. Many "Formers" who grew up on Ellen White's writings can attest to this.² A second result of an incorrectly educated conscience is that we may be doing things with a clear conscience that are actually wrong.³

Now we come to a very important question. Should we always follow our conscience? Let me share with you another illustration from my personal experience. I mentioned earlier that my father died when I was 10 and my mother then supported our family as a schoolteacher. As the years went by, the school children began to get on her nerves. After my sophomore year in academy, my mother took a year off from school teaching to regain her health. I dropped out of school that year and worked full time to support our family. I worked at a large chicken ranch near Napa, California, which had about 18,000 laying hens. Because of my religious upbringing and my own personal Bible study, my sincere belief was that I should not work on Saturday which I knew to be the Sabbath. I made an arrangement with

this chicken rancher to have Sabbath off and work Sundays instead. I enjoyed the work, felt I was doing a good job, and this rancher liked my work. After I had been there several months, one Friday evening he called me and asked me to work the next day, which was Sabbath, to fill in for someone who was sick. I told him I could not, because it was my Sabbath and the Bible said that the seventh day was the Sabbath and on that day one should not do any work. The next Sunday, I went to work as usual. However, that evening just before I checked out, he handed me a check and said that he could not use me anymore because he had to have someone who was willing to work when he needed him. I distinctly remember my conscience telling me that I had done what was right. I had been taught that losing one's job or even one's life was better than to work on the Sabbath which I viewed to be a direct violation of God's moral law. I followed my conscience. I felt no guilt. My conscience commended me for my decision.

Did I do what was right? Your answer will doubtless depend upon your own religious training and what is in your moral database! We could turn this into a discussion about correct Sabbath keeping, but that is not our topic. Coming back to the key question: Should we always follow our conscience? To answer this important question let us do some Bible study. Did Paul always follow his conscience?

"Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, 'Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.'" Acts 23:1

"In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men." Acts 24:16

"For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you." 2 Cor. 1:12

"But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." 1 Tim. 3:9

"but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience." 1 Tim. 1:5

I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day," 2 Tim. 1:3

"I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit." Rom. 9:1

“and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.” 1 Pet. 3:16

From these verses we derive our second conclusion:

We should always follow our conscience

We should always follow our conscience provided it has not been previously “seared” by repeatedly going against the known will of God. At this point, however, many questions arise. If the conscience may be educated incorrectly—and it can be—are we sure we should always follow our conscience? Could an incorrectly educated conscience lead us to do the wrong thing? What happens when we follow our conscience wanting to do right, thinking we are doing right, when in fact we are doing wrong because our conscience database is either incomplete or programmed with error?

It is clear from the verses listed above that Paul always kept a clear conscience. This was true not only after his conversion but also before it. Note again Acts 23:1

“Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, “Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.”

But does the fact that Paul had a clear conscience mean that he always did the right thing? Absolutely not.

“I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them. On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied.” Acts 26:9–15

These verses show that Paul had a clear conscience when in fact he was going 180 degrees away from truth. Note carefully his conclusion. Here we find the answer to our question: What happens when we set out to do right, think we are doing right, when, because of an improperly educated conscience we do the wrong thing?

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.”
1 Tim. 1:12–15

God looked at Paul’s heart and there he found a man who had determined to always do what he believed to be right. And God said, “I can use a man like that,” so God called Paul and filled him with His Spirit which enlightened him because God knew that Paul would always be true to his conscience.⁴

This is not an isolated teaching. In Acts 3:17 we read, “Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders.” Like Paul, many of the Jewish leaders acted in ignorance (from an inadequately educated conscience), so God enlightened them on the day of Pentecost. Then, after they had received the Holy Spirit, we read, “and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.” This principle is clearly stated in Acts 17:30. “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” We must, however, make a clear difference between those who habitually seek to do God’s will as they understand it and those who previously have seared their conscience by not following the known will of God. Here is our fourth conclusion.

When we follow our conscience thinking we are doing right yet because of an inadequately educated conscience we do the wrong thing, God overlooks our ignorance and will enlighten us.

Next, we must ask, what happens if we go contrary to the known will of God and/or violate our conscience? Scripture leaves no room for doubt here.

Could an incorrectly educated conscience lead us to do the wrong thing?

"keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith." 1 Tim. 1:19

"But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron." 1 Tim. 4:1-2

"To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him..." Titus 1:15, 16

Acting contrary to our conscience causes spiritual disaster.

To illustrate how these four principles operate in real life, contrast two Bible characters: Paul and Balaam. God spoke directly to Balaam giving him a clear indication of His will (See Numbers 22:7, 12, 17, 20; 31:16.) Balaam had no deficiency in his conscience database. However, Balaam was not satisfied to do God's will which was clearly revealed. He had his eye on the wages of divination so he began to compromise ever so slightly with God's will. Then little, by little, he went further and further away from God's side, until he was on the side of the enemy of God. His counsel led Israel into sin, which resulted in the loss of at least 24,000 lives.

Paul, on the other hand, did have a deficiency in his conscience database. However, he determined to always have a clear conscience and do what he believed to be right. He started out as a persecutor of the church, 180 degrees away from God's intrinsic will. However, God saw his heart, realized Paul was acting in ignorance, and in grace and mercy, God enlightened Paul with His Holy Spirit. Paul repented of his error, and God revealed to him truths, which completed his conscience database. Paul continued to follow his conscience and his life influenced many millions to trust in Christ as their Savior.

God does not judge from outward appearance, but He looks on the heart, the conscience. And today He is looking for people who will always do what they believe to be right. If he finds them, he will overlook their ignorance, enlighten them with His Spirit and expand their ministry for Him.

But what happens to those who have a deficient moral database and refuse opportunities to correct this deficiency?

Notice how the religious leaders who listed to Stephen in Acts 7:54-58 responded.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.... But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him..."

We concluded earlier that if our moral database is deficient causing us to do the wrong thing when we believe we are doing right, then God would overlook our ignorance and enlighten us. However—and this is an important however—if we refuse to look at the evidence that is within our reach and purposely close our mind to the facts, then this closed-minded attitude may also cause spiritual disaster. In great sorrow Jesus said to his generation "For the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them." (Matt. 13:15) Over and over again, Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." The closed-minded attitude expressed by the Jews cemented them into their rigid theology and they refused to look at the truth of Christianity. Later Paul described this attitude in these words: "just as it is written, 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not,' down to this very day." (Rom. 11:8) This leads us to our fifth conclusion:

Refusing to study and look at the facts can be as dangerous as going against our conscience which can cause spiritual disaster.

I have a deep concern for two groups within Adventism. The first group can be represented by some who send letters to the Editor in *Proclamation*, and other SDAs I speak with on the phone. In essence many hundreds of the communications I have with Seventh-day Adventists can be summarized as, "We have the truth of the Adventist message, you have left Adventism, therefore we know you and the other writers for *Proclamation* are wrong and we won't waste our time looking at your deceptive materials."

By using this as an illustration I am not suggesting that *Proclamation* is the source of all truth. God and His Word alone can claim that. What concerns me, however, is that when so many honest SDA pastors leave Adventism, those who remain often do not want to know why they

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It is not our desire to mock any Adventist teaching, but is it wrong to deny the validity of certain doctrines when there is abundant biblical evidence to do so?

left. Rather, they are content to simply write off their former colleagues as “following the wiles of the devil.” Often they impute all kinds of evil motives on those who leave. Could this attitude of unwillingness to look at the biblical facts be the same as going against one’s conscience? Is this not the same spirit that was manifested by the Jews of Christ’s day? Of Jesus the Jews said, “He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?” (Jn. 9:20)

In the recent *Sabbath School Quarterly* entitled “The Pillars of Our Faith” there is this troubling statement:

As Adventists, we have more reason than ever to trust the prophetic message given to us to present to the world. *We must close our ears and hearts to those among us who mock or deny our end-time scenario.* (p. 97, emphasis supplied)

It is not our desire to mock any Adventist teaching, but is it wrong to deny the validity of certain doctrines when there is abundant biblical evidence to do so? Is not the quote above similar to the cultic mentality expressed by Jehovah’s Witnesses and other cults who will not openly and honestly study with others “because they have the truth” and therefore “know others are wrong”? We believe it is a healthy activity to probe one’s beliefs to make sure they are built on the solid foundation of God’s word and not on the sands of assumption and proof-text hermeneutics.

A second group within Adventism that concerns me is pastors and administrators now serving in the SDA church who know that many—if not most—of the unique teachings of Adventism are not supported by honest Bible study. I have personally spoken with dozens of them. Yet, they pretend to go along with the party line so they won’t rock the boat. Many congregants have no idea that their pastor or conference administrator does not believe in a number of the “27 Fundamentals.” I know from experience how difficult this situation can be, and it is certainly not for me to judge. However, I do express a concern. Could this situation of pretending to believe something that one does not lead to a searing of one’s conscience? When I was faced with this dilemma, I, with two of my church elders, spent five hours with a leading Adventist theologian seeking some ground of reconciliation. He counseled me to tell my Conference President “what

he wanted to hear” but to carefully choose my words so that I could put my own—different—interpretation on them. I believe this type of activity could be the first step leading one down the slippery slope of seared conscience. Martin Luther was right, and biblical, when he said that it is never safe for a man to go against his conscience.

In summary

1. Our moral database may be deficient.
2. We should always follow our conscience.
3. When we follow our conscience thinking we are doing right yet we end up doing the wrong thing because of an inadequately educated conscience, God overlooks our ignorance and will enlighten us.
4. Acting contrary to our conscience causes spiritual disaster.
5. Refusing to study and look at the facts can be as dangerous as going against our conscience which can cause spiritual disaster.

For those of us who are reevaluating our belief system, I believe these are important considerations. These principles from God’s word will serve us well as we seek truth—Jesus Christ Himself.

I conclude with our motto which we take very seriously. “Truth needs no other foundation than honest investigation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to follow truth when it is revealed.” May God help us each to do this very thing!

The Lord willing, the next issue of *Proclamation* will have a companion article, “The Role of Conscience in Christian Freedom.” **!**

¹Tenny, *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 947.

²For example Ellen White said, “It is a sin to be sick.” *Health Reformer*, 1866-08-01; “Displaying photographs of Family pictures is “a species of idolatry.” *Review and Herald*, 1907-06-13; “The many, many photographs in your houses are a dishonor to God. They bear silent witness that you have backslidden from righteousness. I look to heaven and cry, ‘Lord, how long shall this evil divert means from thy treasury?’” *Review and Herald*, 1901-11-26. “There will be no place for outward adornment in the sanctified heart...” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 162; “It is a sin to forget, a sin to be negligent.” *Bible Eco*, 1901-01-14. Anyone who has seriously read EGW can multiply this list a hundred fold.

³It is my belief that God enlightens the conscience of every person born into the world (Jn. 1:9; Rom. 2:14,15). Those who end up becoming evil (Like some of the Terrorists) have repeatedly gone against their God-given conscience until it was “seared” (1 Tim. 4:2). Then, continuing in a wrong way, they came to believe they were doing right.

⁴I recognize that this may be an oversimplification of a complex issue considering that God chose Paul from his birth.

Seventh-day Adventism's dogma of an investigative

Daniel's 2,300 evenings-mornings

What Ellen White claims

DR. FRED MAZZAFERRI

"...the sanctuary... sheds great light on our present position and work, and gives us unmistakable proof that God has led us in our past experience."

Ellen White sets the scene by stating where the movement she helped to pioneer began:

...the sanctuary... sheds great light on our present position and work, and gives us unmistakable proof that God has led us in our past experience. It explains the disappointment in 1844, showing us that the sanctuary to be cleansed was not the earth, as we had supposed, but that Christ then entered into the most holy apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, and is there performing the closing work of His priestly office, in fulfillment of the words of the angel to the prophet Daniel, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed"⁵⁸

Recent Seventh-day Adventist apologists echo this theme with great assurance, as we have seen.⁵⁹

Ellen White's specific theology rightly limits this study. However, readers may also survey her endorsements even of some Millerite errors, as they stumbled towards Seventh-day Adventism's dogma.⁶⁰ At times she even claims that God deliberately hid such errors from her and her fellows!⁶¹ Logically, the first point in Ellen White's polemic in the Book of Daniel strives to justify her belief that a pre-Advent judgment is predicted in 7:9f. The prophet saw the great, solemn day when

the characters and the lives of men should pass in review before the Judge of all the earth, and to every man should be rendered "according to his works" The Ancient of Days is God the Father... It is He... that is to preside in the judgment. And holy angels as ministers and witnesses... attend this great tribunal.[7:13f. cited] The coming of Christ... is not... to the earth. He comes to the Ancient of Days in heaven to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom, which will be given Him at the close of His work as a mediator... Attended by heavenly angels, our great High Priest enters the holy of holies and there appears in the presence of God to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man—to perform the work of investigative judgment and to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits.⁶²

Second in logical sequence is her interpretation of the theological import of the enigmatic 2,300 evenings-mornings of Dan. 8:14:

the prophecy... unquestionably points to the sanctuary in heaven. But the most important question remains...: What is the cleansing of the sanctuary? That there was such a service in connection with the earthly sanctuary is stated in the Old Testament Scriptures. But can there be anything in heaven to be cleansed? In Hebrews 9 the cleansing of both the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary is plainly taught. [22f. cited]⁶³

The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record. As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the end of the year, so before Christ's work for the redemption of men is completed there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. This is the service which began when the 2300 days ended. At that time, as foretold by Daniel the prophet, our High Priest entered the most holy, to perform the last division of His solemn work—to cleanse the sanctuary"⁶⁴

Here she has to appeal, as we have noticed,⁶⁵ to Lev. 16 to explain this cleansing. More strikingly, here she also appeals to the Master's own extremely familiar parable of the ten virgins, Mt. 25:1-13:

The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the cleansing of the sanctuary, brought to view in Daniel 8:14; the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of Days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; and the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by Malachi, are descriptions of the same event; and this is also represented by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage...

In the summer and autumn of 1844 the proclamation, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," was given... In the parable, when the bridegroom came, "they that were ready went in with him to the marriage! The coming of the bridegroom... takes place before the marriage. The marriage represents the reception by Christ of His kingdom. The... New

judgment through Ellen White's eyes:

Jerusalem... is called "the bride, the Lamb's wife!" [Rev. 21:9f. cited] ... Clearly, then, the bride represents the Holy City, and the virgins that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the church... [T]he people of God are said to be guests at the marriage supper. Revelation 19:9. If *guests*, they cannot be represented also as the *bride*... [italics sic.]

They were not to be present in person at the marriage; for it takes place in heaven... The followers of Christ are to "wait for their Lord, when He will *return from* [sic] the wedding." Luke 12:36. But they are... to follow Him by faith as He goes in before God. It is in this sense that they... go in to the marriage...

When the work of investigation shall be ended, when the cases of those who in all ages have professed to be followers of Christ have been decided, then, and not till then, probation will close, and the door of mercy will be shut. Thus in the one short sentence, 'They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut; we are carried down through the Saviour's final ministration, to the time when the great work for man's salvation shall be completed!'⁶⁶

Note, too, that Ellen White insists that her explanation has the support of "Scripture proof" that is "clear and conclusive."⁶⁷ That is, *she firmly believes that she is sharing the literal meaning of Jesus' parable, even though in COL 403-421 she applies it completely differently yet decisively to his Parousia!*

Third in logical sequence is her temporal interpretation of the 2,300 evenings-mornings, calling on Gabriel's prophecy of Dan. 9:24-27 for help. He was sent to Daniel specifically to explain what

...he had failed to understand in the vision of the eighth chapter, the statement relative to time—"unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." After bidding Daniel "understand the matter, and consider the vision," the very first words of the angel are: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy Holy City: The word here translated "determined" literally signifies "cut off":... But from what were they cut off? As the 2300 days was the only period of time mentioned in chapter 8, it must be the period from which the seventy weeks were cut off; the seventy weeks must therefore be part of the 2300 days, and the two periods must begin together. The seventy weeks were declared by the angel to date from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem!⁶⁸

Through Ezra 6:14, Ellen White takes this edict as that of Artaxerxes of 457 B.C, and surveys the fulfillment of the 70 weeks, above all in the Christ-event from A.D. 27 and preaching the gospel to the gentiles from A.D. 34.⁶⁹ So it is simple to pin down the close of the 2,300 evenings-mornings:

The seventy weeks—490 days—having been cut off from the 2300, there were 1810 days remaining... From A.D. 34, 1810 years extend to 1844. Consequently the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14 terminate in 1844.⁷⁰

What the Word of God States: The Fundamental Purpose of the Book of Daniel

A broad view of the Book of Daniel's chronology will greatly aid in testing Ellen White's implicit claim that its time prophecies, including the 2,300 evenings-mornings, must be interpreted by historicism's crucial year-day dictum. To begin, Nebuchadnezzar's first dream merits close inspection. In general, Seventh-day Adventism rightly surveys world history from Babylon. The trouble with its interpretation of the king's traumatic dream, however, is that Daniel pens no flawless survey of this history in advance. At very least, he views no more than the four world empires here. Nowhere are those minor "ten" to be seen. Two distinct, related lines of evidence suffice to attest to this decisive fact. First, Daniel does not predict that the fourth kingdom will break up into ten. Carefully observe his exact words: "there will be a fourth kingdom;" and "it will crush and break;"⁴⁰ "this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it."⁴¹ In sum, "this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle."⁴² Nothing here even hints that this fourth world empire will fissure into separate kingdoms. This applies even to the verb *pelag*, rendered divided in 41. It is not utilized elsewhere, but its cognate noun *peluggâ* applies in Ezra 6:18 to the subdivision of the single priestly office, 1 Chr. 24:1-19. So the fourth empire would be unstable, but still merely one empire.

Secondly, the dramatic climax of Daniel's initial prediction is that the rock "struck the statue on the feet... and smashed them" 2:34. The inspired interpretation, ⁴⁴ is the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. Above all, "it will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end!"

...she firmly believes that she is sharing the literal meaning of Jesus' parable, even though in COL 403-421 she applies it completely differently yet decisively to his Parousia!

Seventh-day Adventism sees all those kingdoms as the nations of modern Europe. But this is an unwarranted surmise. For one thing, the rock smashed far more than the statue's feet. For maximum stress, it is in his very summary, 45, that Daniel explicitly explains that the rock "broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces." Here the relatively random sequence of the statue's constituent components also suggests that they were all broken concurrently. Daniel makes this very point, in fact. The rock "struck the statue on its feet... Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time"; 34f.

As clearly as words can convey meaning, then, Daniel's simple prediction is this. When the rock strikes the statue on its feet, it smashes the statue in toto. Accordingly, "all those kingdoms" crushed by God's eternal kingdom, 44, are the four, not the completely suppositious "ten". In fact, the very same Aramaic verb *deqaq* is employed in 34, 35, 44 and 45 behind the verbs break, crush and smash.

Likewise, the Aramaic noun behind kingdoms in 44 is applied to Babylonia as dominion in 37 and to its three great successors as kingdom in 39-42. This confirms that "those kingdoms" are these four.

But what about "those kings," 44, giving way to God's kingdom? Since the Aramaic nouns *melek* (king) and *malku* (kingdom) differ, does the Seventh-day Adventist case for Europe survive after all? Manifestly, this is clutching desperately at mere straws. At very least, those kings rule those kingdoms! Moreover, *melek* and *malkô* are equivalent. For example, *melek* refers to the four kingdoms in 7:17, while *malku* has identical force in 23f. Notice the same exchange in 2:44, whose halves are precisely parallel in every other detail. God will set up his eternal kingdom, routing all earthly competition.

Simply stated, all four world empires were originally scheduled for annihilation together at the Eschaton.

"But what about the fourth beast in 7?" I hear a host of loyal Seventh-day Adventists object. "Its horns are ten kingdoms that it spawns!" Of course they are. There is no mistaking the inspired interpretation in 21. However, this is no hindrance whatever to my polemic. The ten horn kingdoms are mentioned merely to explain the Little Horn's genesis. Daniel seeks an explanation, 15f. Yet, except for mention of the saints, he hears no more than he first learned from the statue, 17f. There will be four vast empires, but God's kingdom will prevail. It is only in persisting, 19-22, that he sees that the fourth world empire will produce ten more, three of which will be routed by an eleventh, 23f.

Whatever the import of these horns, above all, the fourth empire falls at the Eschaton, just as in 2. The temporal logic of 7:8-11 leads Seventh-day Adventism to a pre-Advent judgment. Daniel first notes the Little Horn, 8. As he watches, 9a, the judgment convenes, 9f. As he keeps watching, 11a, the Little Horn regains his attention. The judgment certainly begins, then, while this fearful tyrant is still active.

However, there is still a great deal more for Daniel, totally absorbed, to monitor! The trouble is, Seventh-day Adventists have long been so completely absorbed in the task of extracting their distinctive dogma from this portion of Scripture that they have scarcely

gleaned its whole message. As Daniel maintains his close scrutiny with no interruption whatever, 11b, it is the fourth beast, not the Little Horn, which is destroyed. This is confirmed in 12, where the other three beasts rate mention. Almost incidentally, he is informed that, when they are overcome, they are not destroyed. At very least, this implies that the four empires introduced in 2 could have been destroyed simultaneously.

Of course the Little Horn is destroyed at the Eschaton, too. Yet Daniel only hears of this in 7:26. What counts is that, as in 2, so in 7, the fourth empire is routed at the Eschaton. This one detail refutes all claim that his book is deterministic. Pagan Rome, which Seventh-day Adventists see in the iron and the fourth beast alike, has long since vanished. So neither 2 nor 7 can ever be fulfilled in toto. The primary evidence that Daniel's entire prophetic message is conditional, however, is his revelation to Nebuchadnezzar, 2:37f. with his dream-statue clearly in mind, that God has given him

...dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

Compare the initial point of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's second dream of 4:10-17 the symbol of the tree "providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air." 21:

...you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches to the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

If ever there were any doubt that Daniel identifies Nebuchadnezzar personally, not merely as the king of Babylon, as the statue's head of gold, that doubt is removed entirely in the patently parallel symbol of the tree. That is, Daniel specifically nominates Nebuchadnezzar as Babylon's final king. Significantly, too, the fact that the noun *melek*, 37, does not recur until 44, singles out this one monarch. Indeed, we miss much unless we recognize that Daniel's ministry is the most outstanding example in the entire OT of God seeking to save a gentile. He catches his attention in a crucial yet forgotten dream, only to discover that it discloses his demise. He rebels in 3, only to witness an arresting demonstration of divine authority in 4. Nebuchadnezzar would lose his sanity for seven "times" 20-26. Nevertheless, Daniel concludes with the pointed directive: "Renounce your sins," 27. The reason is quite obvious: "It may be that then your prosperity will continue?" Clearly, then, this fearful dream need never have been fulfilled. It was, sadly—but because of the king's utter intransigence alone, 29-31.

Nor should this definite case of conditionality be set aside as trivial. For one thing, its apparent discord with the major prediction of 2:39—"after you, another kingdom will rise"—suggests that the latter is likewise conditional. Nebuchadnezzar need not be Babylon's final monarch, as he will be soon, if he heeds God's gracious wooing. For another, when Belshazzar quails before the supernatural writing on the wall, 5:5f., Daniel rebukes him sharply with Nebuchadnezzar's experience, 18-21. The clear inference, 22f., is that the former should

have emulated the latter's lofty example. Far more importantly, Babylon's very fall depended upon Belshazzar's response to God's manifest will. The idolator could have fallen in many ways. However, the handwriting specifically responds to his turpitude, 24. And its dread climax is: "Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians," 28. This is not just Belshazzar's personal nemesis but the fall of his very empire. That need never have occurred—at least, till God's kingdom made it obsolete. In saving mercy he extended Nebuchadnezzar's illustrious reign. But his patience was finally exhausted by Belshazzar's drunken sacrilege.

But what about those other three kingdoms, let alone the ten, or the Little Horn tyrant? Simply stated, if Babylon had never fallen, they may never have added to history's protracted panorama! Here some careful Bible student may object. Jeremiah forecast that Judah's neighbors would be enslaved by "Nebuchadnezzar... and his son and his grandson" Jer. 27:6f., till Babylon fell. The obvious inference, in context, is that Judah would serve them all, too. Then do I err quite seriously in concluding that Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar that he would be Babylon's final monarch? The answer to that question lies in another: What did God really predict for his people's captivity?

Jeremiah's fundamental forecast was that "[T]his whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years" 25:11. The purport is manifest in 2 Chr. 36:21, RSV "All the days that it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfill seventy years." The obvious inference is that the land should have lain desolate for the full 70 years. This has strong support in God's original covenant caution. It should have rested every seventh year; Lev. 25:1-7. If not: "Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate," 26:33 f.. This stern caveat is stressed by reiteration in both 35 and 43.

Then did the desolate land enjoy the full ten sabbaths of the 70 years? The Babylonian Captivity actually took place in three distinct stages. First, Jerusalem was besieged in Jehoiakim's third year; and Daniel was taken to Babylon along with other nobles, Dan. 1:1-5. This can be dated as 605 B.C., at the outset of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Secondly, in his eighth year, 597 B.C., he besieged Jerusalem again, this time removing everyone except the land's very poorest citizens. He also plundered the temple, 2 Ki. 24:8-17. Finally, in his 19th year, or 587 B.C., he destroyed the city itself 25:8-21. When do the 70 years begin? It is the final phase that was "to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah" 2 Chr. 36:21, RSV. Yet the captives were free in 538 B.C., Cyrus' first year, Ezra 1:1-4. If some time passes for his decree to take effect, there are fully 70 years from the first, minimal assault. But this by no means desolated the land. We seem, then, to face a choice. A full count of years can be made. Yet, in light of the key factor, content, the exile was short by some 20 years. Another problem, too, if Jeremiah's forecast is literal, is its mere two kings after Nebuchadnezzar; 27:7. In fact, there were five: Evil-Merodach, Neriglissar, Labashi-Marduk, Nabonidus, Belshazzar. So history's realities do not deny the fact that Daniel expected Nebuchadnezzar to be Babylon's final king. As one expects in conditional prophecy, his

contrition prolonged his nation's supremacy. More can be said about the precision of Daniel's other forecasts, especially his final vision, 10-12, which abandons symbolism entirely. Yet, despite its greater detail, I know of no commentator who has credibly meshed even its every major detail with history. This is a clear caveat per se that Daniel is not deterministic, even if we cannot know all the conditional details setting it on another track.

Likewise, it is edifying to step back further to view the Book of Daniel in the broader context of Scripture as a whole. Daniel's final vision closes with the edict: "close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge," 12:4. He begs enlightenment, 8, but the rebuff is decisive: "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end... None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand," 9f. The clear inference is that the Book of Daniel could not be understood till unsealed.

Jesus' own words to his contemporaries in Mt. 24:15 are therefore especially salient in our grasping the veritable nature of Daniel's book: "when you see... the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand." The transparent inference is that Daniel's book was wide open for complete comprehension in Roman times, almost two full millennia ago. It did not remain sealed till around 1844, as Seventh-day Adventism necessarily teaches. This should not surprise us when at least twice Daniel watched pagan Rome's demise at the Eschaton.

Likewise, in stark contrast to Daniel, John the Revelator is directed: "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near," Rev. 22:10. One must ask, then, if Seventh-day Adventism has really thought very carefully through its confident claim that the latter's book, never sealed from its first-century genesis, is founded on the former's, sealed till the 19th century.

In brief, Daniel was not penned as history in advance but as a record, initially, of God's supreme effort, inherently conditional, to convert a key gentile. Babylon need never have fallen had Belshazzar shown reverent humility like his predecessor. Even then, it is already obvious that God did not inspire his seer to predict what he knew such rulers would do. For one thing, Nebuchadnezzar was not Babylon's last king. For another, human history has lingered long past the fall of pagan Rome.

The Judgment

Strictly speaking, the only explicit references to judgment are in 7:9f., 22, 26. I am perfectly happy with Seventh-day Adventism's polemic that this commences before the End, while the Little Horn is still at the peak of his nefarious power, wherever it takes place—in heaven, or upon the earth.

My major problem is that there is no indication whatever that the saints are ever under scrutiny, let alone individual scrutiny, as Seventh-day Adventists teach, in the pre-Advent judgment. Rather, it is the Little Horn that is judged and stripped of its power, 26. Nor does 22 sway me otherwise. For the judgment "in favor of the saints of the Most High" collectively is merely the positive expression of its

judgment. By removing the fiend from their path, the saints are enabled to possess God's eternal Kingdom. Compare 26f.. The idea of the records of their works being scrutinized to decide their fitness, let alone individually, for the blessing is so absurdly alien to the total context that it should have entered no Bible student's mind. In fact, persecution proves the point. Satan does not martyr those under his full control! Even Daniel's implicit reference to judgment in 12:1 does not assist Ellen White's case, as we have seen,⁷¹ for 7:10 speaks of books, which only ever apply to the wicked.

Simply put, there is not a solitary hint in Dan. 8, let alone in the 2,300 evenings-mornings, of the saints enduring God's scrutiny, pre-Advent or otherwise. So the first point in Ellen White's appeal to Daniel's book confirms that she does not rise above her fellow pioneers, the products of a theologically naïve era. It scarcely affirms that the very same prophetic Spirit inspired her and Daniel.

The 2,300 Evenings-mornings

This is primarily a critique of a crucial Seventh-day Adventist dogma through Ellen White's purportedly prophetic eyes. However, DARCOM has recently expended so much effort in bolstering this dogma that some attention should be paid to its apologia, at least in terms of chronology.

Dr. W. H. Shea points us to the question-answer format of 8:13f., inviting us to decide

...just what vision is referred to in the initial clause of this question, since it is the length of that vision that is measured off by the time period given in answer to this question in... 8:14. There are two alternatives here: Either the vision in question is the whole vision that the prophet has seen up to that point (vss. 3-12), or it is only that portion of the vision that has to do with the little horn (vss. 9-12)⁷²

Shea is perfectly correct. However, despite his protracted apologia, he does not establish that his first option is the valid one. Rather, context makes it quite clear that here in the interpretation of the prophecy, the time period relates to the Little Horn's activities. Compare the limited scope of the same How long? query in 12:6, where a time period obviously applies to a mere portion, not the whole, of a vision. In 11:14 a heavenly courier likewise predicts: "The violent men among your own people will rebel in fulfillment of the vision." In a long list of details, does this one minuscule incident fulfill the whole vision? Of course not! 8:13 has a narrow focus, too – the one expressly detailed.

Dr. G. F. Hasel adds his line of evidence.⁷³ Although translations like the RSV speak in 13 of "the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled under foot," the Hebrew lacks the construct chain by which the noun vision would be restricted to the items that follow it in its sentence. Therefore,

it is clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that the year-day principle is functioning in chapter 8. The 2,300 evenings (and) mornings must cover the whole period of the events symbolized, beginning at some point during the ram period. An understanding of the 2,300 evenings-mornings as literal days does not fit the context of the question... The prophet himself provides the key to the year-day principle...⁷⁴

Hasel is correct about his point of syntax, which I do not intend to treat here. However, he fails to state that relationship can be well expressed otherwise. For example, the common Hebrew preposition *le* simulates the English dative with the sense to or for. Even the day of the LORD, as in Eze. 30:3, illustrates this, although this key expression normally takes the construct chain, as in Isa. 13:6.

In Dan. 8 the preposition *le* twice applies to the key noun vision, and both times, 17, 16 (second), reference is the most obvious nuance of its inherently possessive meaning. So Daniel's most natural sense is this: "The vision will be fulfilled, by and large, in the time of the end." This is also clear in 19, even though the noun vision does not appear in the Hebrew. For Gabriel's promise, "I am going to tell you what will happen," is precisely equivalent to his exposition, "the vision concerns..."⁷⁵ 17. This means that the 2,300 evenings-mornings are eschatological and therefore literal, whatever the precise import of the sacrilege and restitution of the sanctuary upon which they focus as the answer to the question of 13. And the first issue to be settled here is the identity of this sanctuary.

The only reason, even today, that Seventh-day Adventism can give for its crucial conviction that Dan. 8:14 refers to the heavenly sanctuary stems from its historicist assumption that this prophecy stretches into our modern era, when the earthly temple lies in ruins. Rather, if Daniel himself saw no further than pagan Rome, we have no cause whatever to look past the first Christian century.

First, however, it is convenient to evaluate Seventh-day Adventism's claim that reference here is to cleansing the sanctuary. Though the verb *sadaq* has an unmistakably forensic sense, as in this typical rendition of Deut. 25a: "declaring one to be in the right," NRSV, various DARCOM scholars have gone to extraordinary lengths to demonstrate that it can also mean cleansing.⁷⁵ Yet this proves nothing about Daniel's intent in Dan. 8:14. Bible words have a semantic range. But it is the author, not the reader, who selects the specific nuance at each usage, through context. Though Daniel employs cultic language in his passage, there is no reason to interpret it in terms of the Day of Atonement in Lev. 16. He is not discussing the sanctuary's normal function of treating the people's sins, but the aberrant circumstances — absent from Leviticus — of a foe sabotaging the complete cultus.

Above all, the Little Horn desecrates the *miqdas*, Dan. 8:11; 11:31, which lies desecrated in Nebuchadnezzar's wake, 9:17, The transparent inference is that this will be restored with Jerusalem, 9:25, only to be razed again in Roman days, 26f. The cognate noun *qodes* in 9:26 is employed in 8:13. It is used in 9:24 in the intensive form *qodes qadasim*. As this never applies elsewhere in the OT personally, it should be seen here as not meaning the Messiah, but the sanctuary's Most Holy Place, as in Ex. 26:33. This is fortified in that the verb *masah* in Dan. 9:24 appears in Ex. 40:9-11 and elsewhere for anointing the sanctuary and all of its contents as a significant ceremony of initial consecration.

If Dan. 9:24 is the only reference to fulfilling the pledge of 8:14, the perplexing question is, Why should the temple, desecrated by the Romans, be reconsecrated after being obsolesced at Calvary? The answer may lie in the covert surmise back of the query. Most

Christians are shielded by translators from the fact that 9:24-27 may not be Messianic! The Hebrew text is not easily plumbed, and its Greek translators suggest at least two major options. All I will state here, then, is that, unless it can be demonstrated beyond quibble that it is the heavenly sanctuary which the Little Horn desecrates in Dan. 8, Seventh-day Adventists have no rational cause to recognize that sanctuary in 14.

Even if they do, however, Ellen White has no cogent reason to interpret this verse in light of the Day of Atonement ritual of Lev. 16, as we have just concluded, let alone to leap to the NT Book of Hebrews.⁷⁶ So we may move on to her employment of the parable of the ten virgins to support her belief in a pre-Advent judgment of the saints. Frankly, the puzzle here is how she can display competence with Holy Writ in COL, yet offer an alternative, incompatible interpretation in GC, still insisting that this is the meaning of the parable. Because the former easily passes the test of sound biblical hermeneutics, the latter simply does not. She is totally astray to view Jesus' coming here as anything but his Return, as its various close links with its broad context fully attest. For one thing, the temporal expression at that time, 1, links it to the warning keep watch which closes 24, 36-51, like this very parable, 25:13. For another, the rest of 25 continues to treat the Parousia in caveat terms.

In sum, the Berean test decisively rejects the second point of Ellen White's appeal to the Book of Daniel, and brings even further into question her crucial claim to divine, prophetic inspiration.

Ellen White is equally astray in claiming, finally, that the verb *hatak* in Dan. 9:23 means cut off. It acquires this literal nuance only in post-biblical times. In Daniel's day it means determined (decreed), as even her beloved KJV indicates. Her entire argument for commencing the 2,300 evenings-mornings in 457 B.C. therefore collapses, and with it, more devastatingly, their crucial finale in 1844.

Seventh-day Adventists would also have us believe that what Daniel did not understand, 8:27, and what Gabriel clarified, 9:22, was the 2,300 evenings-mornings, 8:13f., especially when, they contend, Gabriel specifically referred Daniel back to a prior vision, 9:23. However, despite first appearances, this notion faces several hurdles, quite apart from the whole decade of delay since the vision of 8.

First, Seventh-day Adventists seem completely oblivious to the decisive fact that Daniel did not understand the vision of 8 because it was sealed, 8:26. The very point of sealing a vision, 12:4-13, is to ensure that it not be comprehended until much later—perhaps well beyond the seer's death.

Secondly, Gabriel's words merit close scrutiny: "Consider [*bin*] the message [*debar*] and understand [*bin*] the vision [*mar'eh*]," 9:23. It seems no coincidence that the verb *bin* is applied to both modes of revelation in the one verse. This suggests that the answer [*dabar*] just given by God, 23, is revealed in the vision [*mar'eh*] of Gabriel, whom God had likewise just dispatched, 21. That is, the noun *mar'eh* includes both Gabriel's appearance and his words in this particular instance.

Confirmation is close by. But first, one key question remains. Does Gabriel's message treat Daniel's concern in his prayer, 17-19? Certainly! Here alone in his entire book is mention of "the decree to

restore and rebuild Jerusalem," 25. He has no reason at all to look back to the sealed vision of 8.

After 9:25 [*sākal*], the understand motif next occurs in 10:1—"a revelation [*dabar*] was given to Daniel... The understanding [*bin*] of the message [*dabar*] came to him in a vision [*mar'eh*]" With all major words present, the parallel with 9:23 is strikingly precise. It follows that, if *mar'eh*, the medium for revealing the *dabar*, is current in 10, it is most likely so in 9, too, not a decade in time back in 8.

Gabriel's words to Daniel agree. "Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding [*bin*] and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them... to explain... , what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision [*hazón*] concerns a time yet to come," 10:12-14. Note the close parallel with 9:21-23. Clearly, Daniel had been seeking an answer for three whole weeks, 10:2f. But Gabriel had been delayed, 13. So the vision in 9 is self-contained like that of 10-12. It does not stem from Daniel's lack of understanding back in 8.

Again, for Seventh-day Adventists, the 490 years usually end faintly in A.D. 34, when Paul turned to the gentiles, presumably. However, end looks just like the Eschaton both times in 9:26, especially when it stems from the same Hebrew noun applied eight times in 8, 11, 12 to the latter. Yet there is a weightier reason. Even if the 490 years are Messianic after all, the very finality of 9:24 warns that the Eschaton, not just Calvary, is in view. This time is allowed, not only "to atone for wickedness," but also "to finish transgression, to put an end to sin,... to bring in everlasting righteousness." That is, the 2,300 evenings-mornings and the 490 years have a common end, not a common start. And the latter subsume the former, not vice versa. Seventh-day Adventism's crucial dogma distorts Daniel's chronology. Nor does endorsing such heresy enhance Ellen White's prophetic credentials.

Conclusion

Ellen White has by no means presented a persuasive defense, from Daniel's 2,300 evenings-mornings, of the crucial Seventh-day Adventist dogma of a pre-Advent judgment beginning in 1844.

First, she utterly misconstrues the judgment's nature and timing in 7:9f. It involves no professors from 1844 till the close of probation. Rather, it involves the fourth beast and the Little Horn, and was timed for the first Christian century. Likewise, she quite distorts the nature and timing of the 2,300 evenings-mornings. These have no nexus with the Day of Atonement, either in type or anti-type, let alone with judging professors. And they do not yield to historicism's year-day equivalence. Rather, they specifically deal with the restoration of the sanctuary polluted by the Little Horn.

Finally, even if the 2,300 evenings-mornings were not both literal and eschatological, no starting date for them is deducible because the 490 years bear no relationship to them. So the Seventh-day Adventist Church's much-vaunted 1844 is a sectarian dogma completely without biblical support.

The sober consequence for this Church's origin should not be missed. William Miller's spurious forecasts of the date of the Parousia led some of his shattered disciples to conclude that only the nature of the sanctuary of Dan. 8:14 had been misconstrued. In fact, 1844

features nowhere in the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy. Therefore, Seventh-day Adventism looks in sheer futility to the Great Disappointment to explain its genesis, except in purely psychological and sociological terms. That is, as we have observed, its "building" labeled 1844 lacks a foundation, just as it lacks all walls and partitions. Without Daniel's assistance, we must now conclude that it is equally devoid of any roof.

Ellen White's credentials are again highly suspect, for her readings of Daniel's forecasts are heretical. Were she a mere pioneer in an age of naïve theology this would be excusable. But an inspired prophet, claiming to interpret another's predictions, certainly does not entirely misconstrue him!

The Genuine Pre-Advent Judgment of Scripture

It is a sorry trait of human nature, even among mature, sincere Christians, that we often throw the doctrinal baby out with the heretical bath water. For example, some Seventh-day Adventists endure decades of virtual enslavement to an excessively legalistic interpretation of the dogma of a pre-Advent judgment. Indeed, it is not unknown for some well-meaning zealots to counsel the dying to resist Satan strenuously in his or her last moments lest a single unconfessed sin rob him or her of God's Eternal Kingdom! However, in finally embracing the true gospel with immense joy, it is all too easy to forget that we are under Christ's command to feast upon "every word that comes from the mouth of God," Mt. 4:4, not on some mere selection of convenient "culinary" delights.

Salvation's very fount is divine justice, Ro. 3:25f. And central among its far-flung motifs is the gift of justification, revoking God's judicial sentence of condemnation, 5:16. So Satan the dogged accuser was cast out after Calvary Rev. 12:7-10, and in heaven's "court" God allows no charge against his sincere saints, Ro. 8:33f. So, in a very real sense, they will never face personal judgment, Jn. 5:24.

Yet even the apostle Paul, renowned for his gospel expertise, insists that "we will all stand before God's judgment seat," Ro. 14:10 to account for ourselves, 12. This is no paradox. For Calvary's rich blessings are certainly ours today in Jesus. But they will be ours in fact at his Return alone.⁷⁷ Indeed, when do we ever stand before the Judge except as forecast by Jesus himself, Mt. 25:31-46?

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Meantime, we should stand firm in our faith in Jesus our Lord, 1 Cor. 16:13,⁷⁸ despite all of Satan's extreme pressure, 1 Pet. 5:9f., ever cautious that we can fall away, to our eternal loss, Heb. 3:12-14.⁷⁹ All too often Seventh-day Adventism's critics chide it for ignoring Scripture's context and broad sweep in favor of proof texts like Dan. 8:14 and Rev. 14:7 in its sectarian efforts to promote a pre-Advent judgment, only to abuse the Word likewise in denying this heresy. As the once saved, always saved notion is specious, even a Christian should heed Paul's words very carefully indeed when he cautions us repeatedly that certain practices will debar us completely from the eternal Kingdom.⁸⁰

Regardless, our best defense against all disaster is the assurance that God is on our side: "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day" 2 Tim. 1:12. For our Father will "keep you strong to the end, so

that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God... is faithful"; 1 Cor. 1:8f. Compare 1 Thess. 5:24; Jude 24.

Few passages achieve the perfect balance more succinctly than 1 Jn. 4:7-21. God loved us through his Son, so we should love each other, 8-11, 19-21. Through his Spirit, he lives within us, 13. His love may mature there, 12, 17, then, "so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment... There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment," 17f.

Then is there a final judgment to update the count of Christians, so that Christ knows whom to take home? Whether or not one allocates any period of time to this activity such a notion ignores one prime fact. At every moment, "The Lord knows those who are his" 2 Tim. 2:19.81 He who sees each sparrow fall always knows my spiritual state. In this light, divine omniscience embodies judgment as a divine attribute. Pre-Advent judgment is not a process involving "books," nor one beginning in 1844 or at any other time. Rather, God always knows simply because he is God!

With such surpassing, balanced assurances ringing in our ears, we are fully prepared to submit to the supreme Berean test a serious suggestion that normally engenders a "Shock! Horror!" response in those who love the genuine gospel. That suggestion is that, despite all that I have said above in refuting the prime Seventh-day Adventist dogma, Scripture still teaches a pre-Advent judgment! **!**

⁵⁸ Ev 223.

⁵⁹ Supra, @ n 26.

⁶⁰ Well documented and analyzed in D. Ratzlaff, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* (Glendale, Arizona, Life Assurance Ministries, 1996), 43-49, 63, 83-93, 105-115.

⁶¹ Ibid., 96.

⁶² GC 479f.

⁶³ Ibid., 417.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 421.

⁶⁵ Supra, @ n. 26.

⁶⁶ GC 426-428, stress original. Cf. 398, 400.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 402.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 326.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 327f. Cf. 410.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 328.

⁷¹ Supra, 14.

⁷² "Year-Day Principle—Part 1" DARCOM 1, 96.

⁷³ "The 'Little Horn,' the Heavenly Sanctuary, and the Time of the End: a Study of Daniel 8:9-14," DARCOM 2, 434-436.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 436.

⁷⁵ E.g., N. E. Andreason, "Translation of Nisdaq/Katharisthesetai in Daniel 8:14," DARCOM 2, 481-486; Hasel, art. cit., 450-454; A. M. Rodriguez, "Significance of the Cultic Language in Daniel 8:9-14," DARCOM 2, 537-543.

⁷⁶ Supra, @ n. 64.

⁷⁷ Cf. dual perspectives of salvation, Eph. 2:8; Mt. 10:22; redemption, 1 Pet. 1:18f.; Lu. 21:28; justification, Ro. 5:9; 2:13, 16; death, 2 Tim. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15:54; resurrection, Col. 3:1; 1 Thess. 4:16; eternal life, Jn. 3:36; Ro. 2:6f.; heaven, Eph. 2:6; Jn. 14:3; God's kingdom, Col. 1:13; Rev. 11:15-17.

⁷⁸ Cf. Mt. 24:13; 1 Cor. 10:12; Col. 1:23; 4:12; James 5:8.

⁷⁹ Cf. 4:1, 11; 6:4-12; 10:26-39; 12:25-29.

⁸⁰ E.g., 1 Cor. 6:9f.; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5. Cf. Heb. 4:13.

⁸¹ Cf. Heb. 4:13.



The Sabbath trumpet

CONTINUED FROM BACK

and day." (*A Colloquium on Exegetical Anomalies*, San Diego Forum, Sept, 1997). So days in Gen 1 aren't 24-hrs. Yet their prophet Ellen White said "...He means a day of twenty-four hours, which He has marked off by the rising and setting of the sun." (*Testimonies to Ministers...*, p.136) This contradicts itself, for sunrise to sunset is only half of a 24 hr. day, and the Bible uses 'from even to even' to mark off a 24 hr day, not 'dusk to dawn'. So Dr. Bacchiocchi says "Note...in the Bible whenever a 'day-yom' is accompanied by a number it always means a day of 24-hours" (*Sabbath Under Crossfire*, p.82). And the *SABBATH SCHOOL Quarterly* echoes him "...the days are designated by ordinal numbers ('day one', 'day two', etc.) This is done only when a 24-hr day is intended" (July, 1999, p.31).

But Amos 4:4 reads "Bring your tithes every three years (Heb 'yom'); and Gen 41:1 reads "at the end of two full years" (Heb 'yom'); and 2 Chr 21:19+20 have two years and thirty two years (both 'yom'). Add these to many in Genesis 5 and 10 where years with numbers are 'yom'. The word 'yom' has over 30 uses in the OT, whether daylight, years, days, time, age(s), and figurative days, etc. These show assigning creation days a definition of '24-hours' is arbitrary, and contrary to good Biblical Exegesis.

How long was Creation?

This naturally follows the above question. The book *SDA Believe...* says 'after six days of creation...' assuming each 'day' as 24 hours. Yet *Sabbath Under Crossfire* speaks of 'creation week' affirming that God created the Sabbath on the seventh day! (p.62) But the Bible says God ceased from all He had created and made on the seventh day, so He could not have created a Sabbath that day!

E. G. White wrote "I was carried back to the creation and was shown that the first week, in which God performed the work of creation in six days... just like every other week" (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol 3, p.90). We see she contradicts herself here, for 'every other week' is seven days—not six.

When was the Sabbath made?

The Clear Word Bible at Lev 23:3 says "There has always been the weekly Sabbath" making the Sabbath as eternal as God. Ellen White said the Sabbath is as old as the Earth itself (*Patriarchs & Prophets*, p.336), dating it to Gen 1:1, before the days of creation. Yet Dr. Bacchiocchi said "It originated at the completion of creation" (*Sabbath Under Crossfire*, p.62); clarifying "God's last creative act was not the fashioning of Adam and Eve, but the creation of His rest for man..." (*ibid*, p.294)

Bible Readings emphasizes God blessed and sanctified the 7th day not while resting, but after His rest was past (p.302, 1958 ed.; p.415+416, '1914 ed.). This asks 'How could He have kept that first Sabbath with Adam and Eve?' and 'If the Sabbath were created (as Bacchiocchi), how could it also be 'a memorial of creation?' and 'If God created all things 'in six days' (Ex 20:11) how did He later create the Sabbath?'

How many Sabbaths were kept in Acts?

Bible Readings for the Home, 1914 edition, says "Here, then, were seventy-eight Sabbaths on which Paul preached in one city... we have a record of eighty-four Sabbaths on which the apostle held religious services..." But after the 1958 edition we're told Acts 18:4+11 "do not definitely prove the Apostle held seventy-eight Sabbath meetings at Corinth..." but only a "comparatively brief time during which he was permitted to use the synagogue." Their *SDA Commentary* concurs, so what we were told about 84 sabbaths in Acts was not true!

Irrespective their *Doctrinal Bible Studies for the Layman* by Mary Walsh, p. 98 still touts 84 sabbaths as does their 'Collins Edition' of the KJV with 'HMS Richard's Study Helps', sold prolifically in the 1960 & 1970's. Still, 40 years later, the Voice of Prophecy "Puzzled?" tract above, says "The book of Acts records 84 Sabbaths on which the apostle Paul and his associates held religious services."

Does Heb 4:9 prove we should keep the Sabbath?

In earlier years this text was so used. But before their *SDA Commentary* came out, Elder F.D. Nichol wrote "If you look again at the galleys, you will note that we declare at some length that we do not believe that Hebrews 4:9 presents a valid argument for the sabbath... Hebrews is not the place to try to establish the Sabbath doctrine" (Aug 29, 1957, SDA Archives). So their commentary says "The writer of Hebrews appears to use 'katapausis' and 'sabbatismos' more or less synonymously" and "Because Joshua did not lead literal Israel into spiritual rest would be no reason for Christians to observe the Sabbath." They add Ellen White's words "The rest spoken of is the rest of grace" (GC 253) "It is the true rest of faith" (MB 1).

Yet their book *Watchtower?*... (above), 10 years later says of Heb 4:9 "It proves that the people of God should still be keeping the Sabbath... there is danger for Christians, that they will not be finally saved... because of disobedience... Hebrews specially links this up with keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath" (p. 73-75). The above Collin's edition Bible gives Heb 4:9 to show the 'Sabbath in the New Testament'; 40 years later Dr. Bacchiocchi so uses Hebrews 4:9 many times (*Sabbath Under Crossfire*, 1998); SDA's

"Puzzled?" has "What did Paul teach in regard to Sabbath-keeping?"

"There remaineth therefore a keeping of Sabbath (margin) to the people of God"; and their 1994 *Clear Word Bible* "So there remains the offer of a spiritual rest that God intends for each generation to have of which the Sabbath is a symbol" (Review & Herald pub, 1994). The last 12 words aren't in any Greek text, but added to the Bible contrary to their saying it's wrong to do, in their 1972 *SABBATH SCHOOL Quarterly* (above).

When was Sunday first known as 'the Lord's Day'?

In Nov 1998 *Signs of the Times*, Dr. Bacchiocchi's article "Deis Domini" tells "The first clear designation of Sunday as 'the Lord's day' occurs toward the end of the second century..." This virtually echoes F.D. Nichol in *Questions on Doctrine* p 166,

"The earliest authentic instance in early church writings of the first day of the week being called 'the Lord's day' was...near the close of the second century."

But ca. 107 AD, Ignatius wrote "no longer observing Sabbaths, but fashioning their lives after the Lord's Day, on which our life also arose through Him," clearly showing the Lord's day is not the Sabbath, but Sunday, when Jesus rose from the dead. (*To Magnesians, sec 9, Apostolic Fathers*, J.B.Lightfoot). Further Dr. J.A.T.Robinson in *Redating the New Testament*, 1976 proved the Apostle John was sent to Patmos by Nero Caesar, not Domitian, so his epistles date before 70 AD. Thus Rev 1:10 using 'the Lord's day' came before 70 AD. Robinson also shows 'Didache' was about 60 AD, saying "And on the Lord's day, gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks." Luke defines this in 62 AD, "On the first day of the week, when they gathered together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). Barnabas (75 AD, Robinson) also writes "wherefore we keep the 8th day with rejoicing, in the which Jesus rose from the dead." So there is valid early and apostolic use of 'the Lord's day' meaning Sunday.

What is the Mark of the Beast?

In 1847 Ellen White said "I saw...all we were required to do was to give up God's Sabbath and keep the Pope's and then we should have the Mark of the Beast and of his image" (*Word to the Little Flock* p. 19, 1847). As only a Sabbath keeper could 'give it up' to get this mark, she said of those observing the first day of the week "the observance of this day is the mark of the beast" (*Ltr* 31, 1898). Yet in 1897 she'd said "When you obey the decree that commands you to cease from labor on Sunday, and worship God...you consent to receive the mark of the beast" But in 1909 she claimed 'light from the Lord' that when Sunday laws come, SDA's were to show wisdom by "refraining from ordinary work...doing missionary work...let religious services be held on Sunday" (*Testimonies IX* p.232+233) So here she'd counseled them to receive the mark of the Beast!

Did the Pope change the Sabbath?

The Catholic church says that following Christ's example and teaching, from the day of His resurrection, she through the apostles and elders changed the weekly day of worship from the Sabbath to the Lord's day (Sunday). Yet SDA's charge Rome changed the Sabbath. "From Saturday to Sunday": Ellen White wrote "I saw...it was the Beast that changed the Sabbath, and the Image beast had followed on after, and kept the Pope's, and not God's Sabbath:" (*Word to the Little Flock*, p.19, 1847).

But SDA scholars know that no Pope ever changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, as shown from their 1919 Bible Conference, recorded in *Spectrum* 10, no 1, p.56. A.G.Daniels: "Why not? The Pope did not change the Sabbath?" H.L.House: "But the Pope stands for the Papacy." A.G.Daniels: "There are people that just believe there was a certain pope that changed the Sabbath, because of the way they follow the words. She never meant to say that a certain Pope changed the Sabbath." Citing the Edict of Constantine isn't valid for he was an emperor—not a pope, and there was no Pope by his time! *Great Controversy* p. 266 says the Papacy was established in 538 AD—long after the Papacy allegedly changed the Sabbath.

Did the Catholic Church change the Decalogue?

SDAs allege Rome changed the Ten Commandments, by dropping the 'second', and 'dividing' the ninth into two to get ten. (*Great Controversy* p. 50+51, 446, 1888 ed.) Catholic Bibles have the decalogue in both Ex. 20 and Deut 5. Many catechisms have it complete; some short catechisms abbreviate prohibition of images! But, following the Masoretic Text, they include images in the first command, and hold desiring one's wife as separate from covetousness. The Septuagint 1000 years before the MT, confirms this. Thus the Hebraic Jews followed this ancient mode of division, while the Hellenistic Jews began the new mode, which Protestants use today.

Did Ellen White give truthful history in Great Controversy?

In their 1919 Bible Conference, the SDA's scholars admitted many historic mistakes in *Great Controversy* (*Spectrum* 10, above). Bros. Crisler and Robinson corrected over 100 in the 1911 revision, in 6 months at Stanford and Berkeley (Robinson, "Historical Discrepancies..." Olson, 1979). Prescott and others furnished other quotes for this (*Spectrum*); and Prescott affirmed "they did involve quite large details." He changed "Babylon could not mean the Romish church" to "could not mean the Roman Catholic Church alone." Robert Brinsmede showed the source Ellen copied for the Waldenses called them 'faithful observers of the Lord's day' which Ellen changed to 'the Sabbath!'

Thus the 1919 Conference concluded just her Philosophy of history was inspired—but "if she endorses the prophetic part of our interpretation, irrespective of details, she endorses it" thus making it right even while the details were wrong. So historic errors yielded philosophical 'truth!'—But it is still error (Rom 3:5-7).

Does God contradict Himself?

Their *White Truth*, p.69 says "God never contradicts Himself" to prevent using the Bible to test Ellen White. Yet on p.93 they allege Numb 25:9 contradicts 1 Cor 10:8, to imply Ellen's contradictions don't affect her 'inspiration'. But Bible inerrancy pertains to its autographs, written some 3500 years ago, translated into different languages and recopied, while Ellen wrote in our day and language with hundreds of errors corrected and suppressed, and scores more remain. Bible difficulties can be resolved—and most have—but Ellen's contradictions cannot, nor can her false prophecies be fulfilled.

Contrary to *White Truth* (above), April '83 *Signs of the Times* article 'Your Bible' says 'Forty writers have been identified...writing over a period of 1600 years. Yet astonishingly they all agree' so the Bible has no contradictions! Yet Dr. Ray Cottrell, at the San Diego Forum, Sept 13, '97 affirmed the inspired Bible writers "made gross errors," only writing to their "best understanding for their time"!

Is it wrong to change the Bible?

We began with the SABBATH SCHOOL Quarterly saying it's wrong to 'read into the Bible what it does not say. Regardless, by 1994 they published their own *Clear Word Bible* with prolific additions, deletions and changes from what the Hebrew and Greek texts say. Gen 1 has 20 changes; chs.1 to 3 have 16 more, as 38 words added to 3:21 and 75 added to 3:6. Re the Sabbath 28 key texts were distorted with 33 words added to Mark 3:5; and 35 to Heb 4:4; and 57 added to Heb 9:6. These changes uphold their false teachings about the Sabbath and maintain Ellen's contradictions to the Bible. Isa 8:19+20 says "If they speak not according to this Word, there's no light in them."

Was Ellen White a 'Bible Scholar'?

Years ago we were impressed her writings had to be inspired, for no one could

write so well, having only a third grade education. But the flyleaf of their 1970 paperback edition of *Desire of Ages* reads "Written with authority by the noted religious leader and Bible Scholar, Ellen G. White..." How many ten thousands copies of this 'White Lie' went out in its 6 printings by 1975?

We've seen over a dozen areas of error and conflict in SDA's "Sabbath Truth". Certainly, like the Voice of Prophecy's tract "Puzzled?" which was given my friend witnessing in the mall, they 'puzzle' the flock.

Thus WW Prescott wrote "It seems to me that a large responsibility rests upon those of us who know there are serious errors in our authorized books and yet make no special effort to correct them. The people and our average ministers trust us to furnish them with reliable statements...but we let them go on, year after year, asserting things we know to be untrue...we are

betraying our trust and deceiving our ministers and people" (to W.C. White, Apr 6, 1915, White Estate, DF 198).

This shows the solid-state confusion SDAs have even in their Sabbath teaching. In 1 Cor 14:8 Paul said "If a trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will rise to battle?"—especially when it becomes an attack on the Bible itself? Can we claim to 'keep His commandments' while we alter His Word? If we'll disobey God, just to uphold our 'prophet' or the 'pillars of our faith', don't they become other gods, which we hold above Him? Surely the Christian who loves Jesus, will flee from such a Babylon of teachings and attacks against the Word of God itself, and rather hold to Christ who is God our Savior, and to the Bible alone, which is our "more sure Word of prophecy". Hundreds of SDA ministers, and thousands of laity, have rightly done just that! **!**



Place for support and prayer

Colleen Tinker

The Former Adventist Fellowship website forum has become a place where people can ask questions, share their experiences, and request prayer as they discover the truth about Adventism. Whether a person is a practicing Adventist and begins to discover the gospel through Bible study or whether he or she is a "disenchanted" Adventist searching for peace for a restless heart, the forum is a place of safety and support on a journey toward truth.

A few weeks ago a man posted that he and his wife had officially left the Adventist church last summer. "I'm still in a bind," he wrote, "I can't get beyond seeing Adventism in everything...I'm writing in desperation; I don't wish to be lost, but I don't see myself finding the truth, whatever that is...I'm sorry to bother all of you with this. I've seen a lot of faith on this site, and I'm hoping that maybe some of it will rub off on me. Thanks for the space to vent."

People responded to his post with reassurance, suggestions for worship and Bible study, and promises to pray for him.

A few days later he posted again, "Thank you to everyone who has responded and to all who are praying; we never imagined how much leaving would affect us. We are glad we have, but we just never guessed how confusing things would become."

He and the forum participants are continuing to dialogue.

The environment of the forum is that of a "virtual" fellowship of the body of Christ. Those who post share not only their questions and struggles but also their insights and the wisdom that God has given them as they have responded to the truth in the Bible. They have encouraged and prayed for each other as several "regulars" have struggled with their growing convictions that they would have to leave the church. The prayers and support continued as those people officially left and as they dealt with the resulting "fallout" from family and friends.

One woman concluded her post about losing friends who had acted supportive when she left the church, "Thanks ya'll for listening, and please keep me in your prayers. I just want to be the daughter of God he wants me to be, and to not lash out at anyone or do anything to damage my witness."

Another woman responded, "I can understand exactly how you feel. It can make you quite angry...All we can do is pray for them that God...plants that little bitty seed that can cause those chains to break so that they can be free."

The support among those posting on the forum is a realization of Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 1:5,6 "For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows...if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer."

Our omnipotent God is not limited by tangible reality. The Holy Spirit is present even in cyberspace, and he knits together the hearts of Christ's followers when they reach out to each other in his love.

Helping people to see Christ more clearly

I'm a 3rd generation SDA who, like many, thought I had the "truth". My husband and I are very close to ___ whom I know have been in contact with you for the past few months. I have read some of the books they bought from you and *Proclamation* as well. I'd like to thank you for writing those books so clearly and for having the courage to do what you did. Many people are being blessed by learning the true gospel and God's love for us. I would love to start receiving *Proclamation*. I have really enjoyed the articles you print. I would like to purchase some books as well to share with my family, friends... Thanks again for your ministry and for helping people to see Christ more clearly.

Gospel message you proclaim is right on!

Please accept this ___ check as my donation. You are doing such a great job. Your newsletters are very informative. What I appreciate most about you is that the Gospel message you proclaim is to right on! The issues about the old covenant and new covenant and grace are so well done in your books too.

Nothing but the gospel of Jesus

Dale, Many thanks! Just mailed the check today... I am a first generation SDA for a little over 30 years... I was raised in a strictly Roman Catholic Church... I am a teacher at ___... The past 21 years I have been studying *Justification by Faith, Judged by the Gospel*, and many "forbidden" or non-kosher SDA books. I have preached nothing but the gospel of Jesus... I have taught Sabbath School lessons to... but never quoted the saying of Ellen White. I never feel comfortable sharing 1844 and many non-biblical doctrines. I questioned many doctrinal issues but the... church cautions their members about me being the "wolf in the sheep". There is one... member in the church who shared the same beliefs as mine... Praise God for that or I will be alone forever in ___ churches... I hope they [his children] learn to rely more on the Bible and Jesus one day. I already read your book *Sabbath in Crisis* which a friend of mine loaned me. I appreciate your insight of the old covenants and new covenants. I praise God for putting Jesus in everything... I am looking forward to what the *Cultic Doctrine of SDA* is all about...

My family boasts a long line of pastors and missionaries

I am a ___, one of the three towns... the Advent movement came out of. My family boasts a long line of pastors and missionaries. To my knowledge I am the first to make a stand against the SDA Doctrines. I am currently living with ___ who is ready to "Deal with God." We are having wonderful conversations, and although he still believes that Ellen White is right. His heart is honest and he is searching. Our Lord says that he who searches finds. I am confident that His Word is good and ___ will soon come free of the ties that bind him. The one thing I won't do is start pounding him with the truth that Ellen White was not whom she claimed to be. I can't yet state for certain that she wasn't in her own heart genuine. I have many questions. If you have information that sets things straight and will help me to clarify my views on SDA and Ellen White that will help my end of the discussions.

I will pray for you and your staff to enter "the ark of safety" before time runs out!

Editor's note: Most Adventists use the term "ark of safety" to refer to the SDA church. We believe there is only one thing that will guarantee our eternal safety and that is trusting Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. Church membership never has been, nor should it ever be, the "ark of safety".

Our personal call is to seek the lost in Agape

As you may know, the enemy is not the Adventist Church, nor is it Ellen White. I believe that doctrinal error combined with remnants of pride in the unrenewed minds of it's leaders were all the devil needed to send a whole flock into the desert of legalism. Our mission is the Adventist Church. In fact my job has been made easier by an Adventist Pastor, ___, not related to me but well known by my family. For he is preaching what ___ calls the 11th Commandment. Yet in that preaching [he] doesn't yet appear to [have] grasped the Pauline revelation... In my testimony, I went through Eastern Religion, New Age and Paganism looking for The God Who Loves Me. I met Him at a multi-denominational baptism and didn't believe my senses. But to be honest I gave Him one more chance. The rest of my

story offends most Christians because they say "God doesn't do that!" But let me assure you God will do whatever it takes to bring a child, turned away, back home. Jesus said, "Suffer the little children..." Then later He told what would happen to those who caused a child who believes to turn away. We can only intercede on behalf of those leaders who are walking in error. Vengeance is the Lord's, and our personal call is to seek the lost in Agape. Anything less puts us in the place of the debtor who after being forgiven much refuses to forgive. You have read his story in the Gospels. The reason I belabor my stand here is this. Of those I've spoken with who've left cultic denominations the tendency is to bash the organization or persons involved. While there is a need to be open and honest about the damage caused, the sign of health restored is when we can, as Jesus said, "Father forgive." Then we must go back to those who've hurt us and, in compassion and Agape, lend a hand to their deliverance. We who have walked the long and terrifying trail of tears out of that valley of deceit are the only ones who can truly understand the fear that grips the hearts of those still trapped. Adventism is a religion of fear and the fear of leaving is more than most can bare. But when those who fear can see those of us who've survived the leaving and the fruit of God's grace abounding in our demeanor, they will draw strength and courage to follow. That is the primary mission of my life and of any organization I become involved in. I appreciate your grace in hearing me out. Our Lord bless you and guide you in your ministry.

I am now free in Christ

I just want to let you know how much I appreciate your newsletter. My husband ordered it, and we both read it immediately when it comes. Having been raised in the SDA church by parents who work for the church I have been through hell, so to speak, for leaving it. I am now free in Christ and hope someday to free my family from the horrible pit of legalism and the icy tentacles of EGW. May God bless you more than you can even imagine. Please don't print my name—I try not to embarrass my parents as far as possible. They prefer to stick their heads in the sand... so I let them.

Thank you so much for removing the “scales” from my eyes

I wanted to thank you for the four books that I received a couple of months ago and wanted to tell you what a blessing they were to me. Your *Sabbath In Crisis* and *The Cultic Doctrine* plus Sydney Cleveland's *White Washed* along with Jerry Gladson's book have all been not only enjoyed but have lifted me out of so much guilt and misunderstanding. Thank you so much for removing the “scales” from my eyes. I was raised as a 3rd generation SDA and essentially left the church around 1975 when I saw how my beloved friend ___ was treated when I was a member at the ___ SDA church. Several of us met every Sabbath afternoon in the Youth Chapel and ___ was the first person that I had ever heard that truly knew what the “Gospel” of our Jesus Christ is all about. ___ was told to cease and desist from teaching his “heresy” so we went off campus and met in a little Baptist Church... Currently I have been attending the ___ Baptist Church and have never felt such love and total commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. Our pastor preaches nothing but the WORD OF GOD and God's wonderful saving grace. I thank the Lord every day for having found such a wonderful church and such caring and loving members. Several times I attended the ___ SDA church and each and every time came away with utter frustration and wondering why I kept doing that to myself. I went out of fear and guilt and reverting to my upbringing when the only “remnant church” was the SDA church. I think that your two books plus Jerry Gladson's book have removed the terrible guilt and fear I have harbored over the past 60 years. I am now free in the certain knowledge of my Savior's loving grace that my eternity with our Lord and Savior is assured. Praise be to God, His WORD and His PROMISES. I just thought that I wanted to share the above with you... I first heard of your *Proclamation* through my brother in law ___. He no longer has any desire to do anything with religion as his former class mate was ___ who was once the pastor of [a very large SDA] church. Because of his Ph.D. in some aspect of religion from ___, which incidentally is where I obtained my doctorate, and ___ preaching of the Gospel along with it's perceived heresy, his ministerial credentials were taken from him... I told my sister about the four books that I

bought through LAM and sent her Jerry Gladson's book which she enjoyed. I am trying to share my understanding and love of Jesus Christ as it is taught in the Bible and hope that one day she will understand and accept Jesus for the loving Savior that He is. Again Dale, for your *Proclamation* and for the books I bought through LAM, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Do not contact me; I want nothing to do with Satan whom you apparently serve

One should look before one leaps. I just leaped without looking... I have studied you people ever since your hellish lies came out of Australia ...you will answer for it all very soon... Do not contact me I want nothing to do with Satan whom you apparently serve... I would advise you in all haste to get down on your knees and PRAY to GOD to open your blinded eyes. You are now believers in Satan's lies and let you see your lost condition... HE [God] loves you with unconditional love, that not one be lost DO NOT CONTINUE TO GRIEVE AWAY THE HOLY SPIRIT ...IT WILL BE YOUR ETERNAL LOSS...MY HEART ACHES NOW THAT I SEE WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT... I will leave you with one thought. Desmond Ford is a mere sinful man like all the rest of humanity, highly intellectual, puffed up by the sparks of his own choosing...not now or ever was or will [he] be [a] prophet of GOD. The Jesuits have really done a number on him. Oh, how they must rejoice to see his terrible handiwork; which is you his followers. [You have] taken the bait hook line and sinker... REPENT NOW OR SUFFER

ETERNAL DEATH... CAN'T you see you are following cunningly devised fables originated by the father of lies; Satan himself... GOD HAVE MERCY ON YOU, Prostrate yourself before the CROSS there you will find peace and truth not in finite human reasoning... You are on the wrong path... I have tears in my eyes as I write this... goodbye and escape while there is still time... p.s. I am much saddened by what you represent; you crucify Christ afresh by destroying the work of his prophet. Oh! what a shameful thing to do.

Editor's note: from my personal experience knowing Dr. Ford and reading his books; I am convinced Des is a true and sincere follower of Christ. I have never known Des to claim to be a prophet, nor was I aware he had any Jesuit connections, nor do I believe he does. Nevertheless, Dr. Ford is not our guide or pattern. We desire to follow Christ and Him alone. If you feel we are in error, be specific in pointing out where we differ from Scripture. Thanks for your letter of concern.

Thank you for service to Christ our Lord

I have begun to share the excellent knowledge gained from the books and am going to pass them on to others. I am grateful for the books and the extra copies of the *Proclamation*. I am enclosing a donation of \$___. Thank you for your life and service to Christ our Lord, In Jesus.

Mail letters and donations to:

**Life Assurance Ministries
PO Box 11587
Glendale, AZ 85318**

Rome & the Decalogue

A number of responses to the article “Rome & the Decalogue” in last *Proclamation*, took me as defending Rome's ‘image worship’. I only pointed out they had not changed the decalogue as so commonly alleged, but they teach it as in the Masoretic Text.

My article did not endorse Maryology or other abuses under ‘veneration of the saints’ which they may try to distinguish from ‘worship’, but Protestants cannot accept, and most of their laity may not apprehend. While this and other superstitious practices make us shudder—and Rome does teach against superstition and worshipping images of false Gods, we do well to help them see these things as well.

Yet, all this is a different issue from whether or not Rome changed the decalogue which my article addressed. In the past, we have bad-named her for something she did not do, and we may not excuse our false accusations because of their ‘veneration of images’ and such practices, which are contrary to both OT and NT teaching.

—V. Streifling



The Sabbath trumpet: An uncertain sound

Dr. V. Streifling

A few days ago, as my friend was witnessing in the mall, she was given a tract distributed by The Voice of Prophecy from their offices at Manila, Cebu City and Cagayan de Oro, in the Philippines. It was titled "Puzzled? Why not talk to God about the True Day of Worship?" The tract uses witness leading, question framing and many scripture twisting means, to put words into the reader's mouth, as he supposedly talks with God about keeping the Sabbath, or receiving the Mark of the Beast.

Yet it's amazing how "Puzzled" the SDA teaching about the Sabbath is, with many conflicting statements in many areas. Their *Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly*, 3rd qtr, 1972 has in bold print, "Why is it wrong to read into a text something different from what it says?" (p. 40), giving the answer from Prov 30:6 and 2 Pet 3:16, to which may be added Rev 22:18+19. Yet such a specter looms from their conflicting views in their Sabbath doctrine. We'll review some of these below.

Did God sabbatize, or cease creating in Genesis 2?

The *SDA Commentary* says at Heb 4:4 the Gk. word '*katapauo*' means "to stop, to cease, to rest...denotes cessation from labor or other activity...equivalent for Hebrew word '*shabath*'...literally means 'to cease from labor or activity.'" Thus as the Sabbath is not in the text, God's rest was not sabbatizing, (Heb '*shabbathohn*'; Gk. '*sabbata*') but simply

ceasing from creating. Their commentary concurs at Gen 2:2+3, yet they'll still say God kept that first Sabbath with Adam and Eve (as *Signs*, June '83, p.6). Their *Clear Word Bible*, 1994, adds 35 words to Heb 4:4, making it say the same, and the above tract "Puzzled" says "The Sabbath was made and given to man 2500 years before the existence of the Jews. See Genesis 2:1-3."

Did God really 'cease' work at creation, or not?

In 1958 the *SDA Commentary* at Heb 4:4 said "He ceased creating, and then continued in a state of inactivity so far as further creating is concerned." Yet in 1967 their book *The Watchtower: is it God's Channel of Truth?* p74 says "God rested (Heb 4:4) is in the aorist tense showing a past and finished action or state therefore the rest was all over, long ago; and besides Jesus said "My Father continues working until now, and I work!" If God has continued working until now, we know He has never kept a Sabbath since His rest ended in Genesis 3.

Is the Sabbath a feast as other Jewish Sabbaths?

Their *Commentary*, vol 7 p 422 says "It may be noted also that '*sabbaton*'...is used of the day of atonement...of the feast of trumpets...and the first and last days of the feasts of tabernacles, as well as the seventh-day Sabbath." Yet at Col 2:16 they say "the Sabbath days Paul declares to be shadows

pointing to Christ cannot refer to the weekly Sabbath...but must indicate the ceremonial rest days... (see Lev 23:6-8, 15, 16, 21, 24, 25, 28, 27 & 38)." Here they selectively omit vs 1-4 twice saying the Sabbath is one of God's feasts, and Numb 28 concurs. The above *SABBATH SCHOOL Quarterly*, p.56 affirms Col 2:14-16 doesn't include the Sabbath "because the Bible does not actually teach such a thing..." This is cavalier dismissal and an outright denial of Colossians as part of 'all Scripture'. Colossians does speak of the Sabbath for many reasons as: there are no other Sabbaths which aren't included here; SDA's use Lev 23:32 of these feasts to keep the weekly from sunset; it's included with these feasts many times 'in the Law of Jehovah God' (2 Chr. 31:3); the *SDA Commentary* admits the plural spelling '*sabbatwv*' takes the singular meaning; *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* concurs it has this Greek idiom; and '*sabbatwv*' comes from Ex 20:8 'Remember the Sabbaths day (*sabbatwv*).

How long were the 'days' of creation?

The Bible counts the creation days as 'and the evening (dusk) and the morning (dawn) were the first day' etc. It doesn't say 'light and dark' or 'day and night', but uses 'dusk and dawn'—the two ends of a 12-hr period of 'light' which God called 'day' (Gen 1:5, 14, 16 & 18).

SDA's Dr. Raymond Cottrell confirms this "By etymology and contextual usage '*ereb-boqer*' refer to the waning light of the evening, associated with sunset, and the rising light of dawn associated with sunrise, not the dark and light portions of a 24-hour day. Context in the nine Old Testament passages precludes reference to the dark and light portions of a day. In no instance does it permit reference to night

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